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## Book Reviews

Harry Wels

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unable to be purchased. It is usually commissioned for the spot in which it is assembled or performed, or not funded (or income earning) at all. A theme through Kwon's discussion is resistance to the capitalist market economy, which gives priority to art as a commodity for investment. The author carefully distinguishes site works from prior practices. Site-determined, site-orientated, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, and site-related: These are the terms used by practitioners and critics to embrace the range of philosophic, material, and physical possibilities associated with this mode of art-making.

The emphasis in this book begins with the author's investigation of the relationship between the art work and its site over time. The transformation of space, the status of authorship, the contrast between the conceptualization of site specificity and the mainstream public art arena, site specificity as an analogous artistic enterprise, the breakdown of traditional temporal-spatial experiences, the meaning of "community" in community art, and the accelerating homogenization of places: All of these are addressed as a series of predicaments for contemporary site-specific art practitioners.

It is when she critiques the intensifying conditions of spatial undifferentiation, fuelled by globalization, that the author takes her work to a far wider readership. International concern with reconnecting to uniqueness of place has led to the mobilization of site-specific art and the need for artists to take on some elements of nomadism as they create works that challenge deterritorialization. The thoughtful reader can take this argument into a sphere beyond the arts and consider the reclaiming or reassertion of lost difference across the broader social world: something we are likely to see exacerbated by increasing (fear of) global homogenization. Responses to this contemporary condition at worst make a case for revisiting or restyling outdated nostalgia constructs about place. Kwon's implicit suggestion is that diverse cultures could look for exhilarating new cultural artifacts and practices to articulate uniqueness. Site-specific art points in this direction.

This book is impressive for its originality and elegance. Although production values are limited to black-and-white photographs—this is no glossy coffee-table tome—these are adequate to support the author's sophisticated discussion. I warmly recommend this text as essential reading for art practitioners, critics, and anyone needing to engage with theoretical material on the social construction of space, especially the dilemmas of finding expressions of the local in the face of the global.

—Claudia Bell  
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*Environmental Security* (Borderlines Series No. 20), by Simon Dalby (2002). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN 0-8166-4025-4 (HC), 0-8166-4026-2 (PB). 312 pp.

Simon Dalby's book is an attempt to look at security studies in general and environmental security in particular from a critical perspective. By contextualizing security studies, he wants to show first that complexity is involved to a much larger extent than is generally assumed in the more conventional security studies, that is, he problematizes the simple linear causalities often implied in security studies. Second, Dalby argues that critical security studies link their attempt "to some form of a politics of

emancipation" (p. xxii). The first chapter starts with an elaboration on the need to re-think security studies after the end of the cold war, the latter symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall. As a result of this, security studies had to leave the comfort zone of thinking along the lines of the traditional military concerns going with the cold war discourse. Robert Kaplan is probably the author who more than anyone else was able to reroute the popular and scientific attention away from conventional security studies and redirect it to the field of the environment, in his now famous article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1994, entitled "The Coming Anarchy." Dalby's chapter 2 is devoted to the uncovering of the predominantly Malthusian assumptions of that perspective. Set in West Africa, Kaplan argues, according to Dalby, that "the natural environment is the key villain in the piece" (p. 22) and that this is causing crime and social disintegration. If these processes will spread further to other parts of the world, "the natural environment" will become a national security threat for the United States in the future. From chapter 2 onward, Dalby starts to deconstruct and further problematize Kaplan's ideas by constantly adding more context to the issue of environmental security. In chapter 3, he does this by going back to the "key source" (p. 41) of Kaplan's thinking, the work of Thomas Homer-Dixon. According to Dalby, Homer-Dixon was far more cautious in assuming straightforward causalities between environmental degradation and conflict than Kaplan has made of it. Studies in the wake of Homer Dixon's work have even demonstrated that certainly not *all* environmental degradation leads to conflict, but that this depends on a range of contextual factors primarily in the field of sociopolitical processes like poor state performance and historical precursors. Dalby further deconstructs Kaplan's argument by attacking his essentialized and reified approach to the nation state in chapter 4. Here, Dalby draws our attention to the consequences and complexities of the transboundary flows of resources, which actually should force security studies to transcend the discourse of the nation state and the basically neoliberal economic ideology that often goes with it. Dalby also makes clear that there is a lack of historical contextualization and the consequential sensitivity for processes of change in security studies. The idea of the nation state, for instance, and the power configurations in which it operates has changed in the course of history and will continue to change in the future. However, security studies assume a continuation of the status quo as the baseline for their research. Because of this, according to Dalby, security studies basically do not know how to cope with change. Taking into account historical processes would add yet more complexity to security studies. This ahistorical approach also determines the way security studies perceive the environment. It is considered a given at a particular moment in time, and they move on from there, without taking environmental change, that is, environmental history and ecology, into account.

Dalby's deconstruction of Kaplan's ideas continues in chapter 5, in which he clarifies the contextual complexities of environmental security even more by exploring the consequences of the imperial era for the way security studies, and especially those in the United States, construct social reality abroad. Dalby's main argument is that the Western representation of the outside world is still very much the same as it was in the imperial age, particularly with regard to the dichotomous superiority-inferiority divide that separates the United States from other parts of the world. The way to deal with this, according to Dalby, is to look at global processes from a political ecology perspective, which means that you look at what happens in specific locations in relation to global economic processes. It forces the attention onto the international finan-

cial system and global resource appropriation and the way in which these affect and further marginalize the already marginal and less powerful people in the world. The historical context and the consequences of the colonial era for present day social constructions of reality are taken further in chapter 6. In this chapter, Dalby discusses the colonial shadows for the present day world configuration and connects this to an approach that aims at determining the consequences of human activities on the environment in so-called “ecological footprints.” In chapter 7, he returns once more to the uneven power balance in the world, this time from the angle of the use of ecological metaphors. According to Dalby, the authors using these metaphors “draw very heavily on a mechanical lexicon” (p. 123), which they derive basically, as Dalby argued in chapter 5, from a colonial discourse based on the Enlightenment. Metaphors drawn from a mechanical perspective are all about the power to be in control. Applied to environmental security, this means that the environment is looked on as something that needs to be managed and controlled.

Nearing the end of the book, Dalby starts to look at the consequences of his own contextualization of environmental security studies and tries to show its resulting complexities. He comes to the conclusion that security is “unavoidably a matter of culture and politics in an unevenly globalizing world” (p. 150). From there it is a small step to state that security studies have to pay far more attention than has been done so far to historical processes and matters of interpretation, that is, the field of humanities, instead of considering itself to be in the realm of science. In line with his persistent emphasis on the influence of the imperial age in much of security studies’ thinking about the Other and about the environment and on cultural processes laying at the basis of our social constructions of reality, Dalby advises to draw intellectual support from postcolonial critiques and cultural studies. Chapter 9 closes off with an appeal on security studies in general and environmental security studies in particular to strive for the “cultural change” that Dalby suggested in chapter 8. How this should be accomplished is a political question he does not answer. In this chapter, his political convictions and message against a further spread of the neoliberal approach to economic and political life, largely following Kaplan’s argument implying Malthusian assumptions about the world environment and its potential to create conflict, comes to a sweeping end. A refreshingly critical and thought-provoking book worth reading comes to an end.

Dalby’s critical approach stimulates the reader to continue to deconstruct and problematize security studies. This is specifically promoted because of the centrality of the concept of context and contextualization in his book. He argues, as we have seen above, that the complexity of environmental security issues only becomes clear when you start contextualizing it. The concept of context, however, is highly problematic (Dilley, 1999). It is therefore interesting to note, for instance, that Dalby does not deem it necessary to include the word *context* in the index, whereas he puts a great deal of emphasis on it throughout the book. Many scholars in the humanities use the term *context* with great ease, usually to suggest that they have an eye for the bigger picture. It is usually far less easy for them to explain conceptually why they evaluated a particular phenomenon, thing, or configuration to the status of context in their analysis of the object under study, to the exclusion of others. So instead of problematizing the concept of context, scholars usually only explain why something is considered *empirically relevant* to the subject under study and therefore needs to be included in their description of context. This seems also true for Dalby’s treatment of context in rela-

tion to environmental security: He is particularly able to forcefully argue the empirical relevance of the various elements he includes in the context of security studies in the course of his book. This leaves some freedom to the reviewer to also add other aspects that might be relevant in contextualizing environmental security further and to try and argue why these should also be included.

Two related issues come to mind when reading Dalby's book. One is the profound influence of Judeo-Christian religion on Western thinking and culture in relation to its dealing with and feeling of being put on this earth to dominate and exploit natural resources and the environment. The second and related point deals with the (inter-) organizational dynamics inherent in organizational networks that are necessary to operationalize and make worldwide control and domination over natural resources and the environment possible. Dalby seems to tackle these points:

The related assumption that nature is a hostile force requiring political organization, and later technical control, to subdue it is an especially powerful trope that should not be forgotten in discussions of the formulation of security. Individual subjectivity is frequently set against a hostile nature in a struggle for dominance. Nature is thus constructed as an external Other to be dominated and controlled. (p. 125)

But he does not elaborate any further on religious or ideological influences leading to the Western urge to dominate this externalized social construction of nature. Nor does he enlarge on the implications of power relations and intricacies of contestation of the political organization deemed necessary to be put in place to hold the helm of control and dominance. Power struggles are part and parcel of being in control, because the precondition for control is to have the power to set and determine standards and objectives and be able to enforce them. This power struggle is fought in an intricate web of globalized and interorganizational relations. Nothing of this kind in Dalby's book; it is probably not considered relevant enough to be mentioned as part of the context of environmental security. This makes the reader feel left without an answer in dealing with the question, "Very complex, okay, and now what?" Had he gone further into the subject of interorganizational complexities, he could have come up with ideas for organizational strategies or concepts that could be adopted, or at least thought about, by policy makers and practitioners in the field of environmental security. In considering and playing with his suggestions, they might have taken some of the author's very apt and relevant critical discussions to heart. Dalby could have given us more explicit ideas about how to survive and influence the arena of "culture and politics in an unevenly globalizing world" to which he, following others from various theoretical fields, believes (environmental) security is "unavoidably" and ultimately going to (p. 150). Considering the arena in this "unevenly globalizing world," it might have been worthwhile to reflect on the cultural sources and historical precursors of this Western, or should I say American(?), ultimate urge to dominate and control the environment worldwide. This monomaniac search for (the power to) control might well be directly related to the American obsession with all sorts of security issues. Religion and ideology on one hand and uncertainty avoidance through control by organizational means on the other hand already share a long history together according to Hofstede (1991, pp. 130-135).

## References

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—Harry Wels  
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*Globalizing AIDS*, by Cindy Patton (2002). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN 0-8166-3280-4. 156 pp.

As the epidemic of HIV/AIDS approaches its 20 years of world-changing history, Cindy Patton's *Globalizing AIDS* registers this tumultuous history with a vital and judicious summary of major international and transnational discourses found on the scientific and activist fronts. With one foot in science and the other in global politics, the book discusses those discourses that objectify, regulate, and even contest real and imagined bodies and identities affected by the disease syndrome. Patton, a key cultural and political analyst and activist of, and a former consultant on, the HIV/AIDS pandemic since the early days of the crisis springing from the United States, has successfully written an important text that not only culminates her critical insights on the subject from her earlier books but also consolidates and expands those insights into the global terrain. Note, however, that the book is not called "Global AIDS"; rather, "AIDS" is taken as an outcome, a convergence of forces that present (and represent) the disease syndrome as "global." This crucial turn—from naming the crisis global to *situating* it as global—marks the book as a radical departure from many other works on the same subject today.

In *Globalizing AIDS*, Patton delineates the scientific, cultural, and ultimately political logics employed by international and transnational policy-making bodies in their effort to map the spatial as well as temporal geographies of the epidemic. Broadly poststructuralist in method and principle, Patton's book dissects the World Health Organization's Global Programme on AIDS (WHO's GPA) as operating in an unstable confluence of competing logics that spatialize and temporalize the HIV pandemic across world regions, national polities, and international agencies. More important, such logics are used to map across hierarchically conceived, differently racialized, and discriminatorily imagined sexual bodies.

This short book has four main chapters after a brief introduction. The chapters, in fact, represent a series of unfolding narratives. Chapter 1 talks about the pre-AIDS vigilance and courage of a small handful of patients-turned-activists dealing with something terrifying without a Name. This chapter convincingly—and movingly—resets the "original story," should so many of us have forgotten or have been misled about the impossible conditions in the earliest moment of the struggle and how people sick with the disease dealt with it. Chapter 2 meticulously lays out the foundation of languages, thought styles, and imaginations of biomedical work on one hand and popular representations on the other hand, that is, the foundation of discourse that spins around two important axes: the global/local axis and the axis of tropical medicine model versus epidemiological medicine model. There are competing logics at work,